

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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Sunset Beach Bridge Needs More Studying

It'll be interesting now to view the reactions of Sunset Beach residents who have repeatedly defended their antique-style, pontoon swing-bridge from verbal attacks in the past.

Saturday's barge accident that left a portion of the bridge underwater, and residents trapped on the island, is sure to create a renewed effort to have the bridge replaced with a high-rise structure. Both sides now need to come together to discuss what the town's needs are rather than send out chants of, "We told you so," or "You were hoping for something like this to happen."

The fact is the N.C. Department of Transportation is now busy repairing a 26-year-old bridge that is not scheduled for replacement until 1989, a date opponents of the bridge will want to see changed. A repair bill may exceed \$270,000 over one incident that kept the tug and barge on schedule for its trip to Jacksonville, Fla., while leaving behind a group of greatly inconvenienced islanders.

If Sunset Beach romanticists wish to hang on to their unique bridge then they had best arm themselves with better ammunition than simple arguments against growth. There are other interests to consider when trying to weigh the value of a high-rise structure.

Commercial boats traveling the Intracoastal Waterway can travel from the Virginia state line to within miles of the South Carolina line without having to fear the type of disaster the pilot of the the *Angela M* experienced Saturday morning. The addition of two new high-rise bridges at Holden and Ocean Isle beaches, set for completion in 1986, will make traveling by boat safer in Brunswick County's waters.

While the pontoon bridge remains a landmark and exciting part of visiting Sunset Beach, it, like every other aspect of the town, is a victim of modernization and growth. It may already be too late to argue that slower traffic across the bridge will produce slower growth.

For some residents who have protected the bridge in the past, Saturday's accident—and resulting inconveniences—may mark the end of the honeymoon. Others may yet feel the hassles are worth it to keep things the way they are.

No matter what type of bridge the town decides it needs, it's worth renewed discussion between both opponents and proponents of the last pontoon bridge along the North Carolina coast.

Filling A Niche Avoids Competition

Most of us like to know where we "fit in" in a community or a neighborhood or a social gathering. We feel a sense of security when we establish our "role" or determine what is expected of us. In the study of plants and animals the place in the system filled by a particular species is known as its niche.

One of the expectations in ecology is that if there is no species in a community to fill a particular niche, another species will adapt itself over the years to fill that niche. Probably the best example of this has to do with "Darwin's finches" on the Galapagos Islands. Since there was apparently no woodpecker to extract the boring insects from trees and driftwood, a particular species of finch took over that role. Not by developing a woodpecker bill and a long tongue, but by learning to take a straw in its bill and probe the insect from its hole. While this is a very unusual example the idea is the same in almost every community of plants and animals.

Filling a niche usually means the animals are not in competition. Herons and egrets in a marsh can illustrate this idea. They each depend upon small crustacea and small fish for food, but their methods of feeding keep them from being competitors. The night herons usually feed after dark when their daytime cousins are sleeping. The small Green Heron sits low in a shrub or a piece of driftwood waiting for a minnow to swim by and then quickly grabs its lunch. The white Snowy Egrets frantically run around in shallow water in pursuit of food. The Reddish Egret stirs up the shallow water to excite the fish, then extends its wings to cast a shadow where the confused fish run for



Bill Faver

cover. This egret then conveniently eats its fill! The longer-legged Great Blue Heron can wade out into deeper water for its seafood dinner and thus is not in competition. You seldom see herons and egrets fighting for food or vying for space in the marsh.

Another importance of niche is that a balance is created. The ecological "law of control" is that when any species develops beyond the capacity of a community to carry that number of individuals, the number will be reduced by famine, disease, or predation. It is a good thing, too, for we are told that if it were not for controls like these, the prolific house fly would breed enough offspring in just three months to cover the earth at the equator in a band 50 miles wide and a mile high. Niche is probably the most important element in maintaining the balance. If a species is eliminated and the niche remains unfilled, the organism on which that particular species fed will develop beyond limits.

What about man's niche? Man is not only controlled by his environment as are all other animals, but man is one of the few species who can consciously control his environment. More on that later. Man and the cockroach are about the only species who have extended their range world wide without much regard to niche. This should tell us something!

It Was Quiet In The Conference Room Again

During last week's Brunswick County Board of Education meeting, right between the energy management proposals and the non-certified salary scale proposal, came a sound from outside.

"Skrrrrrr!" It must have lasted for several seconds as everyone in the crowded room hunched their shoulders up around their ears and waited for an ugly, loud crash.

Someone had slammed on brakes outside the conference room on N.C. 133. The anticipated loud crash never occurred. Eyes rolled about the room, and shoulders once again relaxed and settled in their normal positions as the meeting continued.

It was cold outside and all the doors and windows to the building were



Terry Pope

shut tight. A television camera crew was in the building recording footage of the meeting along with reporters from four area newspapers, several citizens and school personnel. Just like old times.

Yet it was quiet enough in the conference room to hear a car slamming on brakes outside. The room probably has not experienced such

silence on a first Monday of the month in quite a while.

From the first bang of the gavel until the last (there were only two bangs for a change), the meeting was entirely businesslike. As a reporter, it felt strange covering school business for a change, rather than arguments and personal attacks. Every motion placed before the table passed by an unanimous margin.

I kept waiting to see a violent, argumentative side to those nice, sturdy candidates come out after all, but it never developed. I have a feeling it may never develop as sound and fundamental as this group seems to be.

I've been told that two years ago, when I wasn't around, it seemed the

county had chosen a group of fine candidates when suddenly the honeymoon was over as it was discovered members of the group couldn't get along with one another at a board meeting.

It felt good last week to see board members taking notes and asking questions as though a pop quiz was to follow the meeting. Board member Doug Baxley kept an ink pen flowing all night across his yellow "legal-sized" pad.

You could almost see the wheels turning inside James Clemmons' head as he listened intently to proposals from several energy-management companies who had guaranteed the schools a savings in utility bills. Operating Lincoln Primary School has been the greatest part of Clemmons' life story, so much so that when I telephoned him at home recently he answered, "Lincoln Primary School. I mean, hello."

Following the meeting, Chairman James Forstner told reporters, "I promised to keep it boring." That had been Forstner's campaign promise, to keep meetings orderly and boring for reporters.

Jane Causey, a businesswoman, used her knowledge of operating businesses in leading a discussion on the proposed use of funds for a Brunswick County Educational Foundation.

And Superintendent Gene Yarbrough was seen leaving the conference room carrying Marvin McKeithan under his arm amid a stack of papers. Of the five name plates made for the new board members, someone spelled McKeithan's name as "McKiethan" instead—with a misplaced i.

So it went back for minor adjustments, probably in time for the next orderly, businesslike meeting.



MY, HOW THINGS HAVE CHANGED SINCE THE NEW BOARD TOOK OVER!

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Reduce Drunk Driving Without Discrimination

To the editor:
 Our great nation was constructed on a foundation of majority rule. This idea has given the United States a stable government with peaceful succession to public office. But no government is perfect, and the majority rules at the expense of minority rights.

Discrimination has existed for centuries. Those groups with political strength live, within reason, as they wish. The branches of government at all levels have passed decision after decision infringing on minority rights and privileges.

The states have initiated a lot of this legislation only to have the federal government abolish it a few decades later. As late as 1900 blacks were turned away from polls in North Carolina with such constitutional trickery as a "grandfather clause." Grandfather clauses in most state constitutions prohibited voting by anyone unless his father or grandfather had voted on January 1, 1867.

Of course, neither southern blacks nor many poor whites were able to vote on that date. Most states also had a poll tax which inhibited many blacks from voting.

Furthermore, from the turn of the century until World War I, the South perfected and legalized segregation. The Supreme Court supported the state's segregation laws with the decision in Plessy v. Ferguson.

This decision provided for separate but equal education. Most of these wrongs were created almost a century ago and have been corrected legally since then.

But the federal government spent decades before it realized its mistakes and took actions to correct them. The Plessy v. Ferguson decision stood for 58 years.

Now the U.S. legislature has initiated another act against a minority. This minority is the population of adults from 18 to 21 years of age.

On July 17, President Reagan signed a bill giving states two years to raise their legal drinking age to 21 or lose 5 percent of their federal highway funds.

Again the government has taken a shot at a minority with little political power. The minimum drinking age will punish all young people for a problem created by a few.

The government continues to discriminate. How long will it take them to realize their mistake this time? Raising the drinking age will

not solve the problem of drunk driving. However, raising the drinking age will probably please a voting majority at the expense of a voting minority.

Are people between 18 and 21 adults? Can adults be responsible enough to make their own decisions about drinking? An 18-year-old is considered an adult in every area except a bar. In court he may be tried as an adult and imprisoned in an adult prison. He may also sit on a jury and decide the fate of others.

An 18-year-old may marry and head a family. In the business world he may sign contracts and be held legally responsible for his

agreements. When one reaches the age of 18, he is considered mature and responsible enough to vote for the President of the United States.

Does America send children to war? Within 30 days of a man's 18th birthday he is required to register for the draft. He may also sign up for the armed services without parental consent. Will the day come when a man dies for his country without tasting his first legal beer?

I am not condoning drinking and driving. I believe in tougher penalties for those caught doing so. The number of school programs teaching the dangers of drinking also should be increased.

Furthermore, I am not denying that our government is the greatest in the world. I am simply saying that the terrible problem of drunk driving can be reduced without discrimination. People from 18 to 21 are adults and should be treated as such in every aspect of life.

Edward Lawrence
 UNC-Charlotte

Commentary On The Greatest Of Crimes

To the editor:
 In New York City, unlimited souls live lives so utterly artificial and so far removed from reality that seeing black as white or pink or any other color can be to them the complete norm. Nor has this phenomenon escaped the hinterlands, including Washington, D.C.

With an army of police, with lawyers and judges by the thousands, protection of its productive population could easily be established, except for the profits of crime. Acting criminals are a necessary element in maintaining this odd legal and political structure.

Direct action in controlling criminals in the act is taboo, not only in New York City but engulfs the entire U.S.A. If the supply runs low, im-

port more from Italy, from Colombia—even from the south of U.S.A.

All crimes are to be tolerated. After tribute is paid to the legal system, let them go, for the greatest of crimes is taking the law into their own hands by normally productive and law-abiding citizens. This above all other crimes merits consideration by the Supreme Court.

And, while crimes of all types flourish in New York City as well as in backyard, U.S.A., incite the people's indignation by what goes on in Poland, in South Africa, in darkest Cambodia and Iran. A little more digging might uncover crime in Switzerland.

Let the people back home feel good that it is all over there and not here.

Elmer N. Iberg
 Southport

Thanks For Support

To Johnny Craig
 Sports Editor
 After much deliberation, I have decided to resign my position as head football coach (North Brunswick High School) effective Jan. 11, 1985.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the many times that you and The Beacon have supported the Scorpions and myself over the last six seasons. This help was much appreciated. If I can be of any assistance to you in the future, please feel free to call upon me.

T. K. Farrar Sr.
 Boiling Spring Lakes

Let's Hear It For The Gulls

Would you want to be known as the home of the Sea Gulls for the next 50 to 100 years?

That's the decision facing the students and trustees of Brunswick Technical College.

In a recent polling, students showed a decided preference for a sea gull mascot over anything else. I'm not sure what the other choices were.

Admittedly they wouldn't want to go into a football or basketball game as the Shrimps, Flounders, Sea Snails, Toadfish, or slippery Sand Eels. Think of the morale problem. And Sea Squirts sounds more like little league.

But wouldn't the Sea Horses be a catchy name? Or what about the Terns? The Cormorants? The Oyster Catchers? The Skimmers? The Sand Fiddlers?

While the Sandpipers sounds more like the school chorus, Men o' War or

Susan Usher



the Stingrays would suit if the school wants a tough, be-man image.

Obviously the school wants a mascot that reflects Tech's proximity to the beaches and the ocean. I don't blame them; few schools in the community college system have the good fortune to be situated along the coast. And the beaches are a good marketing technique. UNC-Wilmington, home of the Seabawks, has done quite well with "UNC By The Sea".

Gulls are pretty and very common

along the shore. Most of us like gull-watching. We also tend to buy anything from stationery to a key chain if it has a picture of a seagull on it.

But I'd think twice before adopting them as a mascot. There's more to consider than first meets the eye.

For instance, have you ever seen a bunch of gulls swipe a crab at the beach or fight over a piece of hamburger bun at Hardee's?

Unlike some other birds that live along the shore, gulls are robbers and scavengers, stealing eggs and even chicks from other birds such as terns and cormorants; feeding on refuse and dead animals from surface and coastal waters—and from downtown restaurants.

But college students also hang out in Hardee's parking lot. That may throw points in the gulls' direction.

And because they take refuse from the water, gulls also help in reducing pollution. That's another plus.

A student representative told trustees of the college the mascot would be a "regular" sea gull, the kind found on local beaches.

He may be in for a rude awakening, because there's more than one kind of gull at the beach.

Does he have in mind the scruffier-looking herring gull, a laughing gull (that's the neat-looking one with dark wings and cap) or the great black-backed gull or some other kind?

Lots of times we mistake as gulls those cute little terns that look like swallows when in flight. (They aren't scavengers, by the way, and they can dive.)

But maybe you've got something other than a good Tern or Gull-watching in mind. Let's hear it for the ?